

# HUMANITIES NETWORK

## Knowledge is Power

By David Pierpont Gardner,  
President, University of California

The effect on our lives of recent scientific and technological developments is just the latest manifestation of a profound truth summed up by Francis Bacon 200 years ago: knowledge is power. For the United States, knowledge and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and will define our nation's place in the world's future economic order. Yet our national investment in basic research, the source of new knowledge, has declined as a percentage of gross national product since the late 1960s.

Another trend, further reaching in its implications, is the deterioration in the quality of our nation's schools. The 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education asserts that the educational foundations of our society are badly damaged, a condition threatening our future as a nation and as a people. Here are some statistics brought to the commission's attention:

- Comparisons of student achievement, completed a decade ago, reveal that on 19 academic tests U.S. students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized nations, were last seven times.
- Some 23 million U.S. adults are functionally illiterate as judged by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension.
- From 1963 to 1980, average verbal scores in the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests dropped over 50 points, and average mathematics scores dropped nearly 40 points.
- The proportion of high school students in general studies programs was 12 percent in 1964 and 42 percent in 1979. This is a telling statistic: a general program of study prepares students neither for college nor for work.

In light of these and similar findings, the commission arrived at three major conclusions. First, our

Continued on Page 4

*"We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people."*

— A Nation at Risk

## Beyond the 'Rising Tide:'

### Reading the Waves of Educational Reform

By James Quay,  
CCH Executive Director

"A rising tide of mediocrity" is haunting America. A year and a half after the National Commission on Excellence in Education published its report, the phrase continues to be cited with the insistency of an alarm bell whenever and wherever educational reform is discussed. And not only has the report been discussed by educators but as Commission Chair Dr. David Gardner notes elsewhere in this newsletter, many of the report's recommendations have been enacted by state legislatures.

The California Council for the Humanities is honored that Dr. Gardner, who is now President of the University of California, will present the second annual California Humanities Lecture on October 12. The Council's invitation and Dr. Gardner's acceptance indicate our mutual recognition that there is more to be said about education reform than could be contained in *A Nation at Risk*, and that specifically there is more to be said about the humanities and their place in American education. Though the National Commission's report did not speak specifically about the humanities, Dr. Gardner said in a speech delivered earlier this year that the humanities "have a central place in education because they are devoted to the task, as Ben Morris put it, of 'discovering what it means to be human.'" The title Dr. Gardner has chosen for his California

Humanities Lecture, "The Humanities and our Future," indicates that he intends to elaborate further on this important theme.

When the National Commission headed by Dr. Gardner published *A Nation at Risk* in April 1983, columnist James J. Kirkpatrick predicted that, like other reports decrying the state of American public schools, this report would be ignored. "Here and there a few school boards and city councils will have the courage to do what they know should be done," Kirkpatrick wrote, "but without a tidal wave of support from parents and the general public, nothing much will happen. As a people we are unwilling to make the sacrifices required for excellence in education." He was right about the need for public support, but wrong to say the American people were unwilling to make sacrifices. By November of 1982, educational reform had already become a primary public issue in California thanks to the campaign for state school chief between Bill Honig and Wilson Riles, and by the summer of 1983 a California poll showed that a sizable majority of those living in the land of tax revolt were willing to have their taxes increased if that would improve public education.

As Dr. Gardner's survey on this page indicates, during the last eighteen months, the first surge of educational reform has swept all before it. The battle in California was not whether reform was neces-

Continued on Page 9

## Gardner to Deliver Humanities Lecture

David Pierpont Gardner, inaugurated last April as the 15th president of the University of California, and Chairman of the National Commission on Excellence in Education which produced the celebrated report, *A Nation at Risk*, will deliver the second annual California Humanities Lecture on Friday evening, October 12, in San Francisco. His topic will be "The Humanities and Our Future."

Gardner will discuss the outpouring of reports on education in 1983, their implications for the humanities in our schools, colleges and universities, and will address what must now be done to recognize the humanities as a vital and lasting presence in the lives of our students and in the life of our society.

Continued on Page 2

### California Humanities Lecture

Friday, October 12

San Francisco  
Hilton Hotel

8:15 p.m.

ADMISSION FREE

Phone, 391-1474 for tickets



## GARDNER

Continued from Page 1

The California Humanities Lecture is co-sponsored by the San Francisco Foundation. The lecture was established in 1983 to honor outstanding scholarship and public service in the humanities and to remind the California public of the importance of the humanities to the common good.

Admission is free of charge, but because of limited seating capacity, tickets are required. They can be obtained by telephoning the California Council for the Humanities at 415/391-1474.

Gardner was born in Berkeley and attended the public schools there, moving to Utah for undergraduate study in political science at Brigham Young University. He holds an M.S. in political science and a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of California at Berkeley. He was field and scholarship director of the California Alumni Foundation for two years, then became director of the California Alumni Foundation. From 1964 to 1970 he served in various administrative positions and on the higher education faculty at UC Santa Barbara, including two years as vice chancellor of that campus. He was vice-president of the UC system in 1973, when he accepted the position of president of the University of Utah, where he served for the following ten years. He assumed direction of the University of California in July, 1983.

Gardner has an extensive bibliography of publications, the best-known of which, *The California Oath Controversy*, is an examination of the furor that surrounded the subject of loyalty oaths at the University of California in the fifties. Among his academic honors are a visiting fellowship at Clare Hall, Cambridge University, England, where he is now a permanent associate. He has also been a participant in the Leverhulme Trust examination of Institutional Adaptation and Change in British Higher Education, one of the few invited American educators. He has written and spoken extensively on themes of excellence in education through application of standards, requirements and continued faculty vigilance.

In his Inaugural Address as UC President, Gardner spoke of the University's responsibility for the preparation of students who seek admission, "We should be an active partner with the schools, the community colleges, and other institutions of higher education in helping better to prepare young people for further education. California is a very large state with an ethnically and socially diverse population. Thus, the twin goals of equitable treatment in our admissions and academically exacting standards for our students assume a

special meaning for us in the years ahead."

He also raised a number of "troublesome questions" to which his administration will seek "strategic answers." Among these:

"How can the University preserve and enhance its academic standards when the average graduate of our high schools today is not as well educated as the average graduate of 25 or 35 years ago when a much smaller proportion of our population earned the high school diploma?"

"How can the University assist the schools in helping to educate California's greatest wealth, its young people, especially in light of the changing demographics in California's population, which by the year 2000 will find our state composed primarily of ethnic minorities?"

"How can the university be more effective in drawing to its student body, faculty, staff, and administration persons whose ethnicity and sex more fully reflect the heterogeneous population of our State; that is how can we afford in larger measure for those persons the same opportunity for education and social and economic mobility that Americans have always sought?"

"How can the University infuse its general education programs with more coherence, and its upper division programs with more significance, so that we liberate more than we confine the educational, career, and life choices of our students?"

"How can we discover better ways of sharing more widely what we know without coming into conflict with our freedom to seek and to impart knowledge and the conditions that accompany the funding of our efforts?"

Gardner closed the address by noting that one of the purposes of a university is "to remind us of what has lasting value, of what endures beneath the currents and eddies of everyday life . . . In the midst of all that is transitory in our age, we may yet discern something permanent, something that will outshine and outlast all the violence in our contemporary struggles for power. I believe that the University of California bears the standard of significance in a world awash with trivia. It is one of civilization's authentic triumphs. While conserving the past, it helps mold the future - a well-spring of ideas, beneficial to our society and the world of which it is pivotal a part . . ."

At roughly the same time, Gardner provided a retrospective view of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education for members of the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. He described the commission's methods: ". . . We heard from several hundred witnesses - parents and teachers, social administrators and board members, researchers and students, business and civic leaders.

We gathered information by holding public hearings and symposia throughout the country, commissioning and reviewing research on all aspects of education and schooling in the United States - including comparisons with the educational systems of several advanced industrial countries - and meeting several times as a commission to consider this information, discuss its meaning, debate our options, and prepare our report."

He listed some findings:

"Some 23,000,000 Americans are functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension. About 13% of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may be as high as 40%."

"Many 17-year-olds do not possess the higher order intellectual skills we should expect of them. Nearly 40% cannot draw inferences from written material; only 1/5 can write a persuasive essay; only 1/3 can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps."

"Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses. Students have migrated from vocational and college preparatory programs to general track courses in large numbers. The proportion of students taking a general program of study has increased from 12% in 1964 to 42% in 1979."

"Average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests is now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched."

"Half the newly employed mathematics, science, and English teachers are not qualified to teach those subjects; fewer than 1/3 of U.S. high schools offer physics taught by qualified teachers."

"Between 1975 and 1980, remedial mathematics offerings at our public, four-year colleges increased by 72%."

The following recommendations were mentioned:

"State and local high school graduation requirements should be strengthened and, at a minimum, students seeking a high school diploma should be required to complete during their four years of high school what we called the Five New Basics: a) four years of English; b) three years of mathematics; c) three years of science; d) three years of social studies; and e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, two years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended in addition to those taken earlier."

"Four-year colleges and universities should raise their require-

ments for admission.

"School districts and State legislatures should strongly consider seven-hour school days, as well as a 200- to 220-day school year."

"The burden of teachers for maintaining discipline should be reduced through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently, and by considering alternative classrooms, programs, and schools to meet the needs of continually disruptive students."

"Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated."

Gardner also quoted the report's messages to parents and to students:

To Parents:

"As surely as you are your child's first and most influential teacher, your child's ideas about education and its significance begin with you. You must be a *living* example of what you expect your children to honor and to emulate. Moreover, you bear a responsibility to participate actively in your child's education. You should encourage more diligent study and discourage satisfaction with mediocrity and the attitude that says, 'let it slide;' monitor your child's study, encourage good study habits; encourage your child to take more demanding rather than less demanding courses; nurture your child's curiosity, creativity, and confidence; and be an active participant in the work of the schools. Above all, exhibit a commitment to continued learning in your own life. Finally, help your children understand that excellence in education cannot be achieved without intellectual and moral integrity coupled with hard work and commitment. Children will look to their parents and teachers as models of such virtues."

To Students:

"You forfeit your chance for life at its fullest when you withhold your best efforts in learning. When you give only a minimum to learning, you receive only the minimum in return. Even with your parents' best example and your teachers' best efforts, in the end it is *your* work that determines how much and how well you learn. When you work to your full capacity, you can hope to attain the knowledge and skills that will enable you to create your future and control your destiny. If you do not, you will have your future thrust upon you by others. Take hold of your life, apply your gifts and talents, work with dedication and self-discipline. Have high

Continued on Page 9



# Erosion in the Humanities: Blowing the Dust from Our Eyes

By Helene Moglen

... One can readily discern the central place of the physical sciences, of economics, and of professional and vocational programs in an educational structure conceived in terms of public policy needs and pragmatic goals. The role of the arts and humanities (and, one assumes, the more humanistically oriented social sciences) will necessarily be more tenuous: indirect and mediating. Appropriately, when the commission's report describes the function of the humanities, the language changes: it is neither military nor material. The tone is not aggressively competitive – what we might call 'masculine.' Indeed, there is praise for the arts and humanities, which 'so enrich our daily life, help maintain civility, and develop a sense of community.' According to this view, these activities support the main technological, scientific, and commercial purposes of the society. Providing context and environment, they are, in the language of this document, 'feminized' by their subordination. Called on to impose a common culture on a pluralistic society – the majority culture, therefore, on the minority – the humanities are expected to reinforce the shared goals and values assumed by the report. Because a society at risk demands not only unanimity of action but also unanimity of judgment, it does not look to its humanists to help develop in the citizenry capacities for independent analysis and comparative judgment: the awareness of ambiguity and complexity and an imaginative receptivity to diversity and difference. Appropriate humanistic function has more to do with celebration, reproduction and conversation...

The writers of the report of the Commission on Excellence in Education observed that 'a high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom.' In their view, as in (William) Bennett's (chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities), the common culture is not to originate with the people, is not to emerge from the sources of pluralism, but is instead to be imposed on the people as a means of homogenization. Paolo Freire has said, 'There is no neutral education. Education is either for domestication or for freedom.' Clearly, the form of humanistic education that is now being urged on us – and that many of us urge on ourselves – is education for domesti-

cation. To the extent that this vision prevails it must share responsibility for the erosion of the humanities and for the deepening sense of their irrelevance. It is part of the production of a mass culture that renders individuals mute and communities impotent, and it is linked to the divisive nationalism that diverts us from an appropriate commitment to human culture and world civilization...

I believe that it is as readers that we (humanists) have the most to offer: our experience as interpreters and our respect for interpretation. This sets us apart from our colleagues in the natural and social sciences. Technological advances, scientific discoveries, the pragmatic implications of empirical data – all tend to mask the subjective nature of these investigative processes. Indeed, it is probably just because the humanities are perceived as subjective that they are devalued and marginalized within the university and the society. But marginalization, paradoxically, can also be their strength, for it is accompanied by its own insights. Standing at the boundaries of the many disciplines with which they interact, humanists can suggest, through their scholarly work, innovative curricula, and pedagogical techniques, the ways in which all systems of belief derive from personal and cultural bias and the extent to which all systems of knowledge employ traditional assumptions that yield legitimizing theories and establish self-justifying structures. As interpreters, humanists come to value heterogeneity and prize ambiguity. Their disciplines prepare them to find richness in diversity and truth in contradiction, to know that facts are constructed by the mind and that the imagination defines reality no less than reason.

A primary goal of humanistic study should therefore be the activation of the imaginative function in oneself; the goal of humanistic education, the stimulation of that capacity in others. Imaginative projection is the condition of the empathic connection at the heart of reading and interpretation. It is empathy that binds teachers to students and students to one another, empathy that binds us to our communities and that might make it possible for us all in time to become citizens of the world. To help reinvent the relation of people to their communities would indeed be to achieve excellence in education.

What would humanists do, then, if they were to refuse to play the defensive role they have been assigned? What might we accomplish

if we were genuinely to assert our primacy on behalf of our children, our educational system, our universities, and our society? How might we define our goals, and what strategies could we devise to accomplish them? Ironically, there is an intriguing suggestion in a brief section buried in the middle of the report of the Commission on Excellence in Education. It is entitled 'The Learning Society,' and it provides an alternative vision to that contained in the rest of the document:

Education reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society. At the heart of such a society is the commitment to a set of values and to a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world itself changes.

Only here do the writers of the report turn their eyes from the borders of the enemy territory to look within their own society: at homes, workplaces, libraries, art galleries, museums, science centers. Only here – and only briefly – does the report call on individuals, businesses and parent and civic groups to cooperate in strengthening educational programs. Only here does one feel the possibility of communities forming, not in response to the threat of a common enemy but rather out of the recognition of a common need, mutually defined and satisfied only through the efforts of the collectivity.

Purged of the language and spirit of competition, substituting the ideal of community for the realities of individualism, suggesting educational goals important in themselves, not simply instrumental and pragmatic, this segment seems to the humanist to represent the heart and soul of the report. It suggests indirectly the role that the humanists might play in providing leadership for a learning society through institutes that would initiate, coordinate, nurture, and sustain cooperative activities that would be educational in the best and most comprehensive sense.

These humanities institutes (possible versions of the defense committees for the humanities recommended by the Modern Language Association Commission on the Future of the Profession... would permit humanists at universities (undergraduate and graduate students, teachers of writing, literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, languages,

American studies, women's studies, area studies) to join with other humanists in elementary schools, high schools, and community colleges, in business, government, the media and citizens' groups, to pursue common public purposes and to address problems defined at local, national and international levels...

On campuses and throughout communities, the yearlong institutes, with special weekend and summer activities, could sponsor classes and seminars, tutorials, discussion groups, and conferences. One can imagine, for example, a core of writing-related activities, taking literacy as both subject and problem. Writing seminars, workshops and tutorials could be made available throughout the year for teachers and students of all ages. Individuals trained at the institute – including graduate and undergraduate students – could then serve as consultants to businesses and corporations in their local areas. Poets might teach creative writing classes in prisons and hospitals as well as in the schools. Language and linguistics faculty might associate themselves with the institutes, seeking ways to raise public consciousness about the necessity of language and learning and developing language programs that would satisfy a multiplicity of needs and levels of achievement... Major conferences, such as one on science fiction, could raise the issues of war, gender, race and technology and explore them in various ways throughout the community over an extended period of time.

Obviously, these humanities institutes would assume a variety of forms, defined by the communities and universities they would be designed to serve. What they would have in common, however, would be a humanistic vision and a communitarian spirit. They would all actively engage those great dangers now confronted by our society: dangers of alienation and isolation; of aggressive expansion and the threat of world destruction; of racism, sexism and ageism; of inequity disguised as equal opportunity and individualism; of sterility and standardization presented as technological progress. They would be centers of patriotism: patriotism defined not as nationalism but as loving concern for our own communities and for one another, as humane empathy that encourages us to respect others as we would wish to respect ourselves.

*Excerpted from Profession 83, published by the Modern Language Association of America*



## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Continued from Page 1

educational problems are real enough and serious enough to put the nation at risk. Second, there is a growing impatience with the shoddiness in many walks of American life, a shoddiness that is all too often reflected in our schools and colleges. Third, the decline in American education stems more from weakness of purpose, confusion of vision, underuse of talent, and lack of leadership than from conditions beyond our control.

The good news is that this country is ready for educational reform. Many encouraging developments have occurred, at least partly in response to the various reports issued last year. Department of Education figures, as of April 1984, indicate that (i) 47 states have proposals to increase high school graduation requirements, and 34 states have enacted them; (ii) 34 states are in the process of raising college admission requirements, and 22 have done so; (iii) 37 states are experimenting with ways to find more time for academic instruction; 7 have enacted a longer school day, 7 have instituted a longer school year, and 18 are enacting policies for participation in athletic programs and limiting extracurricular activities during the school day; (iv) 17 states are exploring merit pay proposals, 29 are examining career ladders for teachers, and 6 have adopted such programs; (v) 275 state-level task forces have been established in 50 states, including among their members professional educators, parents, legislators, employers, and other concerned citizens. A gratifying number of local school districts have begun comprehensive planning efforts, reviewing the curriculum, studying the status of teaching, and improving school leadership.

The educational reforms now under way will help our society make the transition from the old economic order to the new. This transition will not be easy. But if we care about our future economic strength and the vitality of our social institutions, we will pay attention to this transition and to the educational system that underpins it, for it is upon the success or failure of our schools, colleges, and universities that America's place in the world will be either secured or forfeited.

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## Council Meets October 12

The California Council for the Humanities will hold its next meeting on October 12 in San Francisco. Council meetings are open to the public, and visitors wishing to address the Council concerning its

## State Programs Have New Director

The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced the appointment of Marjorie A. Berlincourt as director of the Division of State Programs, of which the California Council for the Humanities is one.

Berlincourt joined the NEH staff in 1972 to begin its program of Summer Seminars for College Teachers. In that capacity she was associated with CCH Chair Walter Capps who served as the director of one of the seminars, and she recently wrote to CCH Director Jim Quay that she is very pleased to be working once again with Capps. In 1978 she was appointed deputy director of the Division of Research Programs where she established a separate intercultural research program and developed the agency's new travel to collections program.

Berlincourt received her B.A. in classics and French from the University of Toronto in 1950 and her Ph.D. in classics and history from Yale University in 1954.

She considers herself "almost a Californian," having lived in the Los Angeles area for 15 years while teaching ancient history and classical languages and literature at the University of Southern California, California Lutheran College, and CSU Northridge.

NEH Chairman William J. Bennett said, "I expect Marjorie Berlincourt's managerial experience and academic background to prove very valuable to the state committees and to the endowment in her new position."

## Staff Changes

Pamela Johnson, formerly the secretary at the CCH office in San Francisco, will become Administrative Assistant on September 1, replacing Teri Peterson who has resigned to travel in Greece for an indefinite period. Judith Mackel has assumed the secretarial duties.

On July 16 the staff welcomed an honorary member, Maya Kobayashi Barron, the new daughter of Assistant Director Kathy Kobayashi and her husband, Hal Barron. Maya weighed in at 7 pounds, 5.6 ounces, and measured 9½ inches.

policies may telephone the San Francisco office to be placed on the agenda. Remarks are limited to five minutes.

Details of the meeting may be obtained at 415/391-1474.

## Important Works in the Humanities For the High School Student

Authors and Titles Most Frequently Listed

(325) Overall

Author (title)	#	%
1. Shakespeare (particularly Macbeth & Hamlet)	231	71
2. American historical documents (particularly the Declaration of Ind., Constitution, & Gettysburg Address)	161	50
3. Twain (Huckleberry Finn)	159	49
4. Bible	156	48
5. Homer (Odyssey, Iliad)	90	28
6. Dickens (Great Expectations, Tale of Two Cities)	85	26
7. Plato (Republic)	68	21
8. Steinbeck (Grapes of Wrath)	62	19
9. Hawthorne (Scarlet Letter)	56	17
10. Sophocles (Oedipus)	54	17
11. Melville (Moby Dick)	42	13
12. Orwell (1984)	42	13
13. Thoreau (Walden)	42	13
14. Frost (poems)	39	12
15. Whitman (Leaves of Grass)	37	11
16. Fitzgerald (Great Gatsby)	35	11
17. Chaucer (Canterbury Tales)	30	9
18. Marx (Communist Manifesto)	30	9
19. Aristotle (Politics)	28	9
20. Dickinson (poems)	23	7
21. Dostoevsky (Crime and Punishment)	23	7
22. Faulkner (various)	23	7
23. Salinger (Catcher in the Rye)	22	7
24. de Tocqueville (Democracy in America)	22	7
25. Austen (Pride and Prejudice)	21	6
26. Emerson (essays and poems)	21	6
27. Machiavelli (Prince)	21	6
28. Milton (Paradise Lost)	20	6
29. Tolstoy (War and Peace)	17	5
30. Vergil (Aeneid)	17	5

Respondents were high school teachers, college faculty, journalists, leaders of educational and cultural organizations, state and federal government officials.

## New Council Members Appointed by Governor

Three new members will join the Council at its October meeting as a result of appointments by Governor George Deukmejian. The governor also reappointed one current member.

Barbara Logan of Canoga Park is presently a businesswoman, but has been an actress and singer, performing in films, night club acts, television dramas and commercials. She is a member of the American Film Institute and the Smithsonian Institute and serves as a historical researcher for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society in Washington.

Susan Tsu is a research fellow for the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She holds a bachelor's degree from Indiana State University, a master's degree from Seton Hall University, and a Ph.D. from New York University. She began her career in 1960 as assistant to the director for the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in New Jersey.

Esther Wachtell of Rolling Hills serves on the board of governors for the Performing Arts Council of the Music Center of Los Angeles. She is also a member of the board of directors of the American Council for the Arts and of the Aman Folk Ensemble. She holds a bachelor's degree from Connecticut College and a master's degree from Cornell University. She also attended the Arts Management Program at UCLA and the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford, England.

Reappointed to the Council was Dottie Smith of Riverside, a civic leader and designer of fine jewelry who originally joined as an appointee of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

The legislation which regulates the National Endowment for the Humanities gives each governor the power to appoint four members to the board of the NEH affiliate in his state. The new appointees will replace Sylvia Lodge Marks and Franklin McPeak who were also chosen by Governor Brown.



# The Press Comments

## Change

"Anybody who is close to the actual life of schools knows that the essential work in our 16,000 public school districts continues pretty much as it always has, regardless of what eminent task forces say about them. The large-scale solutions of effective school reform are far more difficult to achieve than most observers of education recognize. John Goodlad, one of our best scholars on schooling and author of the recent *Study of Schooling* warns that 'left alone, things tend to stagnate and disintegrate. We cannot afford to shift attention from the condition of the schools, even if test scores improve. But it will take enormous expenditures of energy to make our schools vital places of learning.'

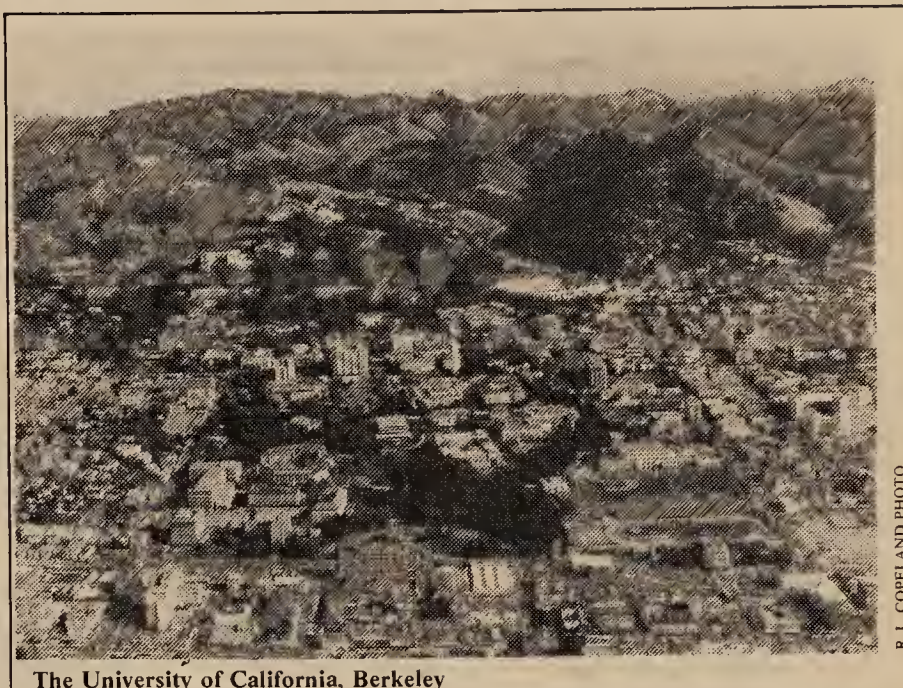
It is unrealistic to assume that school reform can be effectively and lastingly achieved by outside intervention. The whole ecostructure of the schools argues against it. But the real hope, now as always, lies in the willingness of school teachers and administrators to reformulate their own work. Substantial energies of this sort still exist in the schools, and teachers remain open to new approaches. Even then, without attendant public enthusiasm and interest in school change, there exists little likelihood of success.

For the current administration in Washington, the recommendations of the Commission pose several ideological dilemmas. The first is the abundant evidence that money, as well as fresh winds, lie at the heart of school reform. Is it sufficient

for the federal government merely to identify the disease, without offering substantial support for its elimination? The President, upon accepting the Commission's report, ironically praised its members for 'calling an end to Federal intrusion,' and said the findings of the report were 'consistent with our task of redefining the Federal role in education.'

This heads-in-the-sand approach will obviously lead us nowhere. Whatever one's political persuasion, one cannot dismiss abundant evidence that large Federal support of remedial education programs in the sixties and seventies has made an enormous difference in the lives of millions of young people. No other institution could have taken up the slack . . .

George D. Bonham, May/June/83



R. L. COPELAND PHOTO

The University of California, Berkeley

## The New York Times

### MEANWHILE, IN JAPAN...

"... The debate over education has sharpened as Japanese sense that something is wrong with their schools. Young parents, almost in echo of well-to-do professionals in United States cities, say they plan to send their children to private junior and senior high schools because they do not trust the public schools to provide adequate preparation for crucial university exams.

... In many speeches over the last year, (Prime Minister) Nakasone has complained that the school curriculum is too rigid, that it discourages individuality, that it

crams facts into children's heads without stirring their imagination and that it does not enable the gifted youngster to develop special talents fully.

As for Japanese colleges, he said, voicing an often-heard complaint, the trick is only in getting into them. Graduating is simple because universities are unchallenging – in his words, 'like Disneyland.'

To underline his unhappiness, the Prime Minister formed a commission to look into how Japan educates the 27.8 million people in its 58,150 schools, from kindergarten through universities. Last spring the

panel reported back, and, perhaps not surprisingly, it found the system lacking.

'Japanese education, in general,' it said, 'is being enveloped in an oppressive atmosphere and is losing its relaxed vitality.'

The commission recommended putting more emphasis on extramural activities 'diversifying' the subjects taught in junior high school and permitting qualified students to skip grades instead of having them advance, as now, in lock-step with classmates."

Clyde Haberman. Reprinted with permission. Copyright © 1984 by NY Times.

## Newsweek

"The best part of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education got the least attention . . . This was the report's suggestion that the value of learning is not contingent on any material public or private 'payoff.' The activity itself, pursued not just in school but rather throughout a lifetime, is the payoff. So the commission strongly implies, anyway, by its insistence that the principal object of our educational reform should be the creation of a 'learning society,' one devoted to the joys and rewards of continuous learning, as distinct from the one-shot passing of some exam or other.

True, this admirably uncommissionlike thought appears in the company of (no doubt justified) warnings about the perils we face as individuals and a nation by being such slobbs about the quality of our schooling; and it may not be quite as unqualified as I would like and therefore have made it sound. But the thought is there . . .

Education as an 'investment' . . .

education as a way to get ahead of the fellow down the street – it is true that generations of Americans have been brought together culturally by the great force of our public schools and that millions of them have rightly seen their schooling as a one-way ticket out of economic and social privation. But you do not really generate the educational values that count when you stress only these external, comparative advantages. People do not become educated or liberated so much as they become opportunistic in relation to such schooling . . .

You give a child nothing, I think, when you give him this joyless, driven concept of the meaning of learning. But alas, there are plenty among us who think this is just fine. Following the great cackles of the political antipermissiveness crowd when this report was released, I was struck again by how much such people, who claim to be champions of education, implicitly view education as a disagreeable thing. It is invariably discussed by

them – and with relish – as something between a medicine and a punishment that must be administered to its unwilling little subjects for their own good no matter how they howl. It is not supposed to be fun, they admonish, and children cannot be expected to like it – whatever happened to our moral fiber and so forth.

Interestingly, this same conception of schooling as something essentially unpleasant that is ultimately vindicated by its benefits seems to animate our occasional bursts of enthusiasm for intellectual pursuit . . .

Some of it strikes me as having nothing to do with teaching a child the joy of learning – of giving him that incomparable and invaluable gift. I see baby quiz-show winners, victims of the same fundamentally anti-intellectual values, people who want to acquire, to please, to show off – not to discover, to learn, to be surprised.

Schooling needs to be saved from these 'friends' – the punishers,

the opportunists and the exploiters who profess an undying devotion to the old-fashioned virtues and the life of the mind. But it will of course not be saved by the purveyors of 'fun' whose idea of making education enjoyable is to gut it and teach things not worth knowing. There is a difference – night and day – between this kind of 'fun' and the joy of learning, and everyone who has ever had one great teacher of a serious subject knows what it is. So do those kids in a handful of slum schools notoriously programmed to fail who instead thrive because they are in the care of people who know what teaching is about. If we could acquire, come to honor, this great value, if we could truly aspire to become a 'learning society,' the rest – the competitive and material benefits – would follow. But we keep trying to do it the other way round."

Meg Greenfield  
May 16, 1983



# Educational Reform

**William Bennett, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, delivered this address at a conference of the Family Forum in San Francisco in July.**

My topic is educational reform. It's a large story – a very big topic, and a very important topic. H.G. Wells said once, "Life is a race between education and catastrophe." In discussing education reform I'd like first to offer something of a brief review of what has been going on over the last year or two.

Second, I'd like to talk about what we've learned – what we know about what makes for good schools and effective education. Third, I'd like to talk about what we should do.

I'm not going to speak specifically about certain topics which have already been spoken to eloquently by the nation's most eloquent spokesman, the President – prayer, the Department of Education, busing, tuition tax credits, vouchers, merit pay. Now you may say, if I'm not going to talk specifically about those what am I going to talk about – what's left? Well, there's a fair amount left.

I'd like to talk about learning and achievement. And again, what makes for effective education. I'd like to talk about what values we bring to this educational enterprise, and I want to argue and I think it's implicit in what I say that it's at the level of our deepest values that the future of education and the future of educational reform really rest.

All right then, educational reform – what has taken place? Well, what's taken place I think we all know – you'd have to be on the moon not to know – has occurred in response to widespread parental and community dissatisfaction and demonstrable deficiencies in our schooling. These are now public matters. The issue is public; it is a matter being discussed and acted upon throughout the country. Though there are some good, even some very good schools in America, over all the condition of schooling in America is not good. There is much evidence of this: a spate of reports, some 20 major education reports have made this quite clear. The famous Bell Commission, or Gardner Commission, talks about a rising tide of mediocrity in American schools. Those of you who read all these reports might think we're experiencing a rising tide of commission reports in which we're about to be buried. But the major point of these reports is that education in America is suffering a very serious decline.

Now some people are trying to counter this and say, "No, this is

just the bad news; there really is good news." But the evidence is really quite solid – the College Board decline over the last 15 years which has been rather constant, leaping up at one point last year and people talking about that as a condition of salvation, almost – it's a pretty sad story. In all the international assessments of educational progress in all areas, the children of the United States never finish on top. Often they're in the middle, often at the bottom. Some people have argued, "Well, this has to do with the fact that more children are in school now than ever were before, and children who formerly didn't go to school are now going, the poor, disadvantaged, and so on." The problem is that the evidence also reveals that this decline is taking place at all socioeconomic levels. Not only do you have a dip in the College Board score, for example, for the nation as a whole, but the number of people scoring above 600, above 650, above 700, above 750 in the College Boards, is experiencing an absolute decline – that is, as the number of people taking the test increases, the number of people scoring in those highest levels is declining, not relatively but absolutely. So the evidence is pretty clear.

What do these reports document? They report and document a decline in this kind of learning, in this kind of achievement. But there's more going on than that; people are distressed about what they see in some schools as increased trends toward violence, violence that is not being arrested. We see increased arrest rates at a dramatic pace – the use of drugs, teenage pregnancy, and other afflictions that suggest the schools are not the healthy environment they should be. For many schools also there is a pervasive sense that they have lost their moorings, they have lost their anchor, they've lost their sense of what they are about. There's a sense that many people share that little of an exemplary nature is going on in our schools, a sense that the schools have ceased to be proud and confident institutions and have become less effective, and less noble places. What are the causes of this?

I think you hear as many accounts of this as you would have speakers. Let me just list what I think are six very important causes. I'm talking right now about the time from 1965 to the present time. One cause, I think, is a decline in expectations across the board, a decline in expectations of students to learn and to behave in certain ways. Second there has been a decline, I think, in proper parental involvement in the schools. Third, I

think we have seen an increasingly demoralized and in some places deficient teaching cadre. Fourth, we've witnessed a kind of pedagogical amnesia, a kind of forgetting of the answers to the question, "Why do we educate – what is education for?"

Fifth, we have seen, particularly in this period, '65 to '80, a victimization of the schools by every goofball fad or fancy that comes down the pike. If somebody has a rotten idea, the chances are, in the last 15 years, the first place where that would be experimented and carried forward would be in the schools. Sixth, the schools reflect a general kind of cultural confusion.

Plato said the essential political problem, the essential political question, is the raising of children. It's quite clear if you look at the history of schools in the last 15 years many people have forgotten to do that. Remember, we use the locution 'raise' children; we do not say 'lower' children; we do not say 'extend' children; we say 'raise' children, that is we are to raise them to something better. I think in the last 15 years it's not been clear to many people what that idea of raising means.

Now, let me say something about the shape of reform at this point in the country, because I think it bears comment. The most interesting thing about educational reform in America right now is that unlike many educational movements in this period, it is principally a populist movement. It is a movement of citizens; it is a movement of individual parents, a movement of community leaders, and some – a few – journalists and a few scholars. Some of you are probably members of this educational reform movement; some of you perhaps are, without even knowing it. The main point is, it is not primarily a movement of the education establishment itself. Often this educational reform movement in America, as a matter of fact, goes right into the teeth of the education establishment, so the people, the American people, large numbers of American people are saying, "We want better schools, safer schools, healthier schools, sounder schools," and the education establishment is responding to this in different ways.

Sometimes it reacts by being defensive. We can now see the great counterreaction to the educational reform movement setting in. People are saying, well, the criticisms are overstated, the scores aren't really that bad – educational excellence is a code word for racism, all sorts of other arguments of this sort. So sometimes the education establishment acts defen-

sively. Sometimes it tries to catch up with the public; I recently heard the National Education Association say at a meeting that it had been for excellence and discipline all along. If they had been for excellence and discipline all along – the leadership of NEA – it was pretty hard to hear that amidst their calls for nuclear arms education, sex education, and the like. But here they're playing, or trying to play, a kind of catch-up. And again, some parts of the education establishment try to dismiss this whole thing as a temporary excitation on the American scene which will soon pass – let's just wait it out and go back to business as usual. One of the favorite things that critics of sound education reform like to say is that education is simply too complex a phenomenon to understand or to criticize. I want to say that this is not true, and it takes me to my second point – what makes for good schools and for good education?

There is no mystery in my view about what makes for effective education, what makes for effective schools, though some people have a very real interest in trying to obscure this as much as they can. In my view the greatest virtue of the Bell Commission, the Gardner Commission work, "A Nation at Risk," is that it was written in clear prose; it did not have the usual government obscurantist prose. It did not say that the causes of educational decline are many and so complex it's hard to fathom. What that report said, and we should all be grateful at least to the authors of that report for this, that report said, "Education is something we can do and we have decided not to do it – we have blown it."

That simple, lucid, clear way of stating it is one of the best things that that education report did. We know what makes for good schools. We know what makes for effective schools. We know what factors are critical. The interesting thing that's occurred in all the research in the last ten years to my mind is this: social science has caught up to common sense. We now know from social science what people of common sense have known for a long time. A friend of mine says that all of social science can be characterized in one way simply as the elaborate demonstration of the obvious by methods that are obscure. I think that's a pretty interesting notion. But we now have the evidence coming in from the social scientists, all the surveys, all the hundreds of thousands of dollars of government studies supporting what most people knew all along. Studies have con-

Continued on Next Page



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firmed that good schools, effective schools, always have certain features. Again, obvious to common sense, but these needed to be rediscovered, to be confirmed by social science research before they gained respectability in the media and other places.

What are those features? First – good schools have strong and effective leadership. That is, a good school has someone in charge. Obvious enough. Second: the values of the leader are shared by the adult staff in the school. Put into common sense language, everybody is going in the same direction. Third: students are held to high expectations of work and performance. It is assumed that students will learn, not assumed that they will not learn, and students know it is expected of them that they will learn. Fourth, disciplinary matters and problems are dealt with early on, effectively and firmly, and tend, once they are so dealt with, not to arise again. Again, obvious enough. Fifth, homework helps. It's hard to know how people can say this with a straight face as a result of six years of research, but they do. Homework, given frequently and if it is done by the students, not by their parents, is the best single predictor of academic achievement; the single most reliable predictor of academic achievement is the presence or absence of homework that requires student effort. Great discovery. Sixth, and finally, the researchers tell us, and this is most important, effective schools have a certain ethos or character – a certain moral tone. They are serious institutions. They are about their business and they have a sense of purpose. They are run by adults who know who they are and who know what the school should do and should not do. They are decided institutions. That sense of purpose and character pervades the school and is known by the student, recognized by the student very early after the student enters.

I just want to mention two more factors, the first of which is I.Q. and aptitude. Schools may or may not – it's not clear – be able to do much about modifying I.Q. or aptitude from the time a child enters school. But what we do know is that children of all different levels of I.Q. and aptitude can learn in school if the adults around them do the right and not the wrong things. The essential turnaround here is from the position taken in the mid-sixties by Christopher Jencks who said that socioeconomic class and aptitude were kind of absolute grim predictors as to whether children would succeed or not. It now turns out that good schools, effective schools, schools that have the marks I just described, can provide educational achievement for students of all levels, socioeconomic and I.Q.

and aptitude if those marks are in place, and if those schools are doing their jobs. There will, of course, still be differences based on I.Q. and aptitude; no one is denying that. But the point is that good schools and effective schools teach everybody something.

A second factor has to do with the quality of instruction and the environment of learning. Here again the research bears out what most of

to say it because – and now I give it to you from the social scientists directly – in a visit to 250 schools around the country, these researchers found that 13% of all first graders who were at school that day could not be found in their assigned classroom at the time they were supposed to be there, 18% of fifth graders, and apparently it gets worse. So, starting from one extreme, if a student is not in the classroom it is not likely that he is going to learn



us would have suspected right from the start – the simple factor of instructional time matters. What that means is that if more time in the school is spent on learning than on other things, children will tend to learn more. Again one can't resist a smile, but as George Orwell said, and this is 1984, "Sometimes the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." Time spent on learning as opposed to doing other things matters. Do we even have to say it? Yes, we have

much in the classroom. Other factors that contribute to the cutaway from instructional time, according to researchers, are: talking to peers, wandering in the hall, staring into space. Instructional time matters – time on task, as it's often stated.

The other thing that the social scientists call the psychological environment of learning probably is the thing that has to do the most with parents – that has to do the most, I suppose, with the larger

themes of this conference, the Family Forum. The child's attitude toward learning, his interest in learning, his interest in behaving in a certain way conducive to learning – here, the critical factor is the parent. For we are talking about time spent on learning at home as well as in the school. At this, the Family Forum, I would remind you of something we all know but perhaps don't make as explicit as we should: not all teachers are parents, but all parents are teachers. The parent is the most important teacher. The parent is the indispensable teacher. The parent, from the child's point of view, is the one teacher a child cannot choose or select for himself. The critical importance of the parent – the parent's attitude toward learning, toward behavior, toward motivation, toward school, and the teacher's secondarily, toward learning and proper behavior are critical. That is, when we are talking about schooling and education, it makes – or can make – all the difference in the world if the adults in a child's life are, on the one hand, encouragers of learning, proper motivation and behavior, doing this by the way they spend their time and the way they talk and deal with their children. Or whether, on the other hand, the adults in the child's life seem indifferent or uninterested or even hostile to learning. In short, the values parents instill in their children have a powerful and determining effect on whether and how much their children will achieve. And the values teachers and other educators bring to their classrooms tell us much about what the children will learn. It is very much a matter of values.

So if the factors I have just mentioned are critical, what are the ones that are not? It turns out from everything we know that financial expenditures per student, as the social scientists say, correlate weakly with learning. A shorthand way of putting this is that you cannot spend your way to excellence. Second – this is painful, but has to be said. Class size correlates weakly with educational achievement. One of the major planks in many of the educational groups such as the NEA is to have ever smaller classroom sizes – classroom numbers. There may be reasons for this that are sound; there is no evidence, however, that a smaller classroom makes for more effective learning or teaching. Third, whether a school is public or private matters less than whether the school has the marks of effectiveness. That is, effective schools are effective, be they public or private, when they have the features I described earlier. More private schools in the research than public schools tend to have these kinds of marks. Public schools, when they have these marks, are effective.

Continued on Next Page



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Fourth, teachers' salaries correlate weakly with educational achievement. You cannot get increased educational achievement by simply raising teachers' salaries. Now, we may want to act on some of these points anyway – that is, we may decide we want smaller class size for some of our teachers anyway, and I would think a good reason for that would be that some people work well with a small group while other people are very effective in a lecture. We may want to spend more on education in our community because we want to be the highest-spending community in the state, for whatever reason one may want to do that. We may decide we want to raise teachers' salaries, and I think myself that raising teachers' salaries of very good teachers is a very good idea – my notion of merit pay, a little different from that of other people who have spoken about it, is this: I think very good teachers should get very good salaries; I think mediocre teachers should get reasonable salaries, and I think bad teachers should get no salaries – nothing. And I think that frankly you could take the pool of money that is in teachers' salaries and by eliminating the bad teachers you would still have enough money in that pool to pay very good teachers. It would mean an increase in class size, but I think that would be worth it.

In any case, whatever we may want to say about these factors I've just mentioned, we cannot say that they are the way to educational achievement. So what is to be done? I think this too is clear and obvious. First, parents must act as if they are what they are – that is, parents must act as if they are parents. Adults must act as if they are adults. They must act on the recognition that they are the child's critical teacher. Second, people must keep the heat on schools to be effective, and not just parents but all members of the community. Whether our children are in that school or not, the children who are in that school will be our children's neighbors, our neighbors, the teachers of our grandchildren, et cetera. People in the community must do this by active engagement in the work of the school.

Third, a single and rather more specific recommendation. If one has very little time to spend on the schools in one's community and can only do one thing, the identification, tracking, assessment and scrutiny of principals may be the single most important thing you can do. The school leader – the person who sets the tone of the school, that is listed in all the studies as probably the single most important factor. Fourth, continue to hold schools, to hold children, to high expectations. The assigning of homework, the providing and main-

taining an environment conducive to learning – parents must watchdog this. Five – all of us must underscore the fact that education is, in addition to being an intellectual activity, in its deepest sense a profoundly moral and political matter. The kind of moral tone and moral atmosphere of the school matters critically. What goes on matters to all of us.

Now let me close by suggesting a contrast. I've talked about what we know about effective schools; does this answer the question of why our schools have gone into a decline? Well, I think in part it does, but there are other ways to look at this question. Why have our schools fallen? Why have they declined?

I said something about the atmosphere of the school, the moral tone of the school. I think no better example can be given of the kind of difference between schools of today and the schools of another period than by looking at a very straightforward and simple example, contrasting two different kinds of learning. Let's take such a case – learning the alphabet. How do children learn the alphabet today? How did they learn it in a different period?

Many children learn the alphabet today by watching Sesame Street, by reading Dr. Seuss and other books like Dr. Seuss and like the material on which Sesame Street is based. So let me give you the example of Sesame Street teaching the child the letter B. B: Words flash on the screen. Beautiful. Boat. Batman. Bird. Beetle. This is followed by a little Muppet skit called the Beetles, singing and doing the letter B. Then a little jingle – a little brown boy in a blue robe with a little brown bear, Bosco, makes bubbles. Get the idea? B. Dr. Seuss, for A and B does the following: "Aunt Annie's alligator; Barbara baby bubbles, the bumblebee. For D: David, Donald, do – dreamed a dozen doughnuts, and a duck dog too.

M: Many mumbling mice are making midnight music in the moonlight. Mighty mice." Dr. Seuss.

I don't think that this material is pernicious. I think there is a lot worse material than that. But my question is, is that the best we can do? Contrast that way of learning the alphabet with another way. The world of Dr. Seuss and the world of Sesame Street, I submit, is a kind of fun world of jingles and cute words and sounds. It's a world where, for the most part, funny and silly things happen. It's a world that is presented to the child in a rather childlike way.

But consider what was done in an earlier time in this country to teach the alphabet. Look at primers and pre-primers used in the first grade and even earlier by parents who taught their children at home.



From the Book "Second Lives, The Contemporary Immigrant/Refugee Experience in Orange County: The Shaping of a Multi-Ethnic Community"

MICHELE HIGHTOWER PHOTO

These books too had rhymes for letters in the alphabet. Their authors capitalized, as do the producers of Sesame Street and Dr. Seuss, on the delight that children take in verse. They had a somewhat different point to them.

Let me read a few of them from the New England Primer. My friend John Silver and I have worked on this, and I am indebted to John for originally pointing me to these. The letter A: In the book, in the primer, next to the letter A, the following sentence: "Adam and Eve their God did grieve." B: "Life to mend this Book attend" (this was accompanied by a picture of the Bible). C: "The Cat doth play and later slay." Cats, you see, were not just pets in that view and not just like Bosco in Bubbling Brown Bears. The child was told that cats tormented, killed and ate mice. Children were not protected from this grisly fact, not protected from reality. They did not get a sugar-coated sense of reality.

D: "A Dog will bite a thief at night." Here was an admonition – dogs, thieves. F: "The Idle Fool is whipped at school." A self-explanatory point to the child. Another introduction to reality. H: "Wrought by Hand, great works do stand." J: "Job felt the rod, yet blessed his God." A bit of teaching; a bit of introduction to a moral universe. Q: "Queens and kings must lie in the dust." So here a child who has not yet gone to school is reminded that even kings and queens are mortal. T: "Time cuts down the great and the small." If the child missed the point earlier about the kings and queens and thought it was restricted only to kings and queens, time cuts down the great and small. The point is now generalized: all people must die. X: "Xerxes the Great shared the common fate." Now the child who has not yet learned to read or write has been told this fact about

mortality three times.

This is the way Americans of earlier generations taught the alphabet. This, I think, this kind of moral seriousness, this kind of introduction of the child to moral reality is what's missing in the earlier examples, and it's what's missing in some of our schools. I think the New England Primer for all of its limitations, in fact, addresses the child at a far more dignified level than efforts such as "Spot and Jane Run and Play. Run, Spot Run. Catch, Jane, catch. Dick and Jane are friends." The book was written, the New England Primer, in a period where condescension toward children had not become an educational dogma. It was assumed in the earlier days that children were on their way to becoming adults and had to be introduced to a universe of reality.

Most significantly, such an example shows that it is possible for education, for learning, to be looked at and to be treated as and to be worked with by adults as an adjunct, as a concomitant, not necessarily to fun but to life, to an introduction to right and wrong, to good and evil, to fate, to mortality, to the noble and the base. This kind of moral seriousness, I suggest, is perhaps the thing that is most lacking in our schools. Let us restore, while taking advantage of what techniques and methods of modernity and technology afford; let us restore if we can this sense of reality and moral reality to our schools. And my guess is that achievement will improve as well. Let us restore the sense of reality to our schools and to our students so that we can give our students and our children education worthy of their future, worthy of their posterity, worthy of their parents and worthy of themselves. That, I think, is the kind of question on which all of this discussion of educational reform finally rests.



## JAMES QUAY

Continued from Page 1

sary but what kind of reform was needed and how much money could be spared from the state budget. The reasons for this lack of opposition are numerous but one is that many of the proposed reforms – statewide graduation requirements, increased instructional time, financial incentives for improved student test scores, Mentor Teacher programs, etc. were structural in nature. We can all agree that increased structural time and rewards for superior teachers will improve education; the difficulty begins in deciding what students will do during the longer school days and years and in identifying which teachers are superior. And predictably, with the structural reforms in place, the debate is now shifting to issues of content.

*A Nation at Risk* is a creature of the first wave of reform. Though it does address itself to content, its recommendation of Five New Basics – English, history, mathematics, science and computer science – describes only the number of years those subjects should be required, and not the specific courses or texts that will inform those subjects. The closest it gets to addressing the need for a shared content is the following:

A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom.

For our country to function, citizens must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues, often on short notice and on the basis of conflicting or incomplete evidence. Education helps form this common understanding . . . (p. 7)

I find this a cautious claim. It is a level of education that is to be shared, not a content, and that education is only to foster a “common culture.” What exactly is meant by “common culture” is not specified. But in an article excerpted in this newsletter, Dr. Helene Moglen of U.C. Santa Cruz reads this passage to mean that a common culture is to be imposed on citizens by means of a core curriculum in the schools, making those schools the explicit agents of domestication. I think the report sidesteps this issue, but Dr. Moglen’s fears are not groundless. Shortly after *A Nation at Risk* was published, literary theorist E.D. Hirsch published an article entitled “Cultural Literacy” in *The American Scholar*. Hirsch’s central thesis is explicit in its call for turning the schools into a forge of the common culture: “a certain extent of shared, canonical

knowledge is inherently necessary to a literate democracy.” Hirsch goes on to suggest a need for a national school curriculum and a National Board of Education on the pattern of the New York State Board of Regents.

NEH Chair William Bennett’s remarks on educational reform, delivered to the Family Forum in San Francisco in early July, also show sympathy for a common group of texts and in mid-August, Bennett published a list of 30 “important works in the humanities for the high school student.” Pursuing a suggestion by columnist George Will, Bennett and the NEH surveyed 325 college faculty, journalists, government officials and educational and cultural leaders asking “suggestions of works in the humanities with which every American high school student should be familiar.” The survey produced a list that ranges from works by Shakespeare, cited by 71% of the respondents, to Tolstoy and Vergil, cited by 17%.

Finally, readers of the last *Humanities Network* will remember that California’s Superintendent of Public Instruction has endorsed a similar listing in principle. “I don’t think we should shy away from saying these are the 100, 150, 200 books that incorporate the wisdom of our heritage in society,” Honig wrote, “and that we would like students to have read a good portion of those by the time they graduate from high school or eighth grade.”

I don’t mean to suggest that Hirsch, Bennett and Honig are part of a grand conspiracy to foist a list at the national or state level or that there’s much chance such a canon could be enacted now or in the near future. The announcement of the list of 30 texts drew negative criticism from the National Education Association, largely on the basis that a canon as traditionally defined has excluded works by members of minority groups and women. For his part Hirsch has written an article insisting that by cultural literacy he does not intend a core curriculum, while Bennett has stated that the 30 books in no way constitute a “federally recommended curriculum.”

Proponents of cultural pluralism may be reassured by these disclaimers, but I do think there’s something misleading about proffering a list of books as a solution to cultural atomism. News reports of the list have accented the relative agreement on texts, (Shakespeare gets 71%, the Bible 48%, Marx 30%) but what get omitted are the rationales behind the individual selections. In choosing ten texts, most of us would frame a list that encompassed a range of literary experience. We’d want to ensure, for example, that every student learned something about the claims

of the individual conscience whether from John Milton, Henry David Thoreau or Martin Luther King, Jr. And we might want to ensure that students read a firsthand account of combat, whether from Homer’s *Iliad*, Stephen Crane’s *Red Badge of Courage*, or Eric Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

My quarrel with the NEH list is not that its contributors were insensitive to such matters, but that the compiled list is a survey uninformed by such reasoning; it reproduces the letter of what a high school education might consist of without the quickening spirit that animates it. I think the list beneficial in that it once again challenges educators to declare what they believe is worth knowing and worth reading by such a list. But I suspect that school teachers and administrators are called upon to do this continuously. When William Bennett told the Family Forum that we need moral seriousness in education, I found myself in agreement. Moral seriousness requires conscious choices by educators, discussion of what’s important and what’s not. But I believe it a genuine question whether moral seriousness requires that students must read Charles Dickens and write essays on the evils of 19th century slums, or read Richard Wright on the evils of 20th century slums, or tour the slums in their own home towns and write essays about what they see. I mean this as a genuine question, not a rhetorical one.

What is not in question is that moral seriousness means and has always meant that we think hard about what our children shall read and what issues they shall discuss. And in this country, moral seriousness has also meant broadening that discussion to include as many as possible. All the authors cited above turn naturally to Thomas Jefferson when issues of democracy and education are raised. Hirsch justifies the need for cultural literacy by appealing to Jefferson’s vision of a democratic citizenry educated well enough to govern itself. And *A Nation at Risk* quotes an eloquent passage for Jefferson in making its case for a common understanding:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.

With what substance will the discretion of the people be informed? The second wave of educational reform will address this question, and in the months to come, we shall be printing more on this subject in

this newsletter. I invite readers to send their own thoughts on this issue to us. But behind the second wave, I see the inevitable swell of a third. Whether cultural literacy comes to consist in a set of texts, values, courses, or something not yet contemplated, nothing will be accomplished unless classroom teachers endorse and implement it wholeheartedly. The great question of the third wave of reform will ask how the teachers are to teach. Right now that question is tainted with the current disenchantment with “methods” or “technique.” But after all it is not schools or curricula or even texts that are morally serious, it is people, and we shall not have improved education if we forget this.

John Dewey pointed out that what a student learns in the classroom has less to do with what she learns than how she learns. A student encouraged to discuss Plato learns a different lesson from the student who listens to a lecture on Plato. As a corollary, how much students come to really attend to great books or great questions has to do with the esteem they accord their teachers and what they perceive to be the esteem their teachers hold for what they are teaching. Attempts to improve education must reach the teacher. As Robert Penn Warren observed in responding to Mr. Bennett’s survey, “the teaching is all.”

If the debate about cultural literacy is to be anything other than an exercise in nostalgia or futility, it should serve as a goad to public discussion about what a culturally pluralistic people need in the way of common understanding in order to govern themselves with discretion. For us in California, with our own polycentric culture, the problem of what cultural literacy would consist of is as vexed as it is pressing. But I believe that a true common culture must be *discovered*; it cannot be mandated. That is often an inconvenient fact for reformers of all kinds, for it means long hours of debate lie ahead before we can achieve the goal. But it is also one of the strengths of a democratic society, and one we must be continually willing to defend.

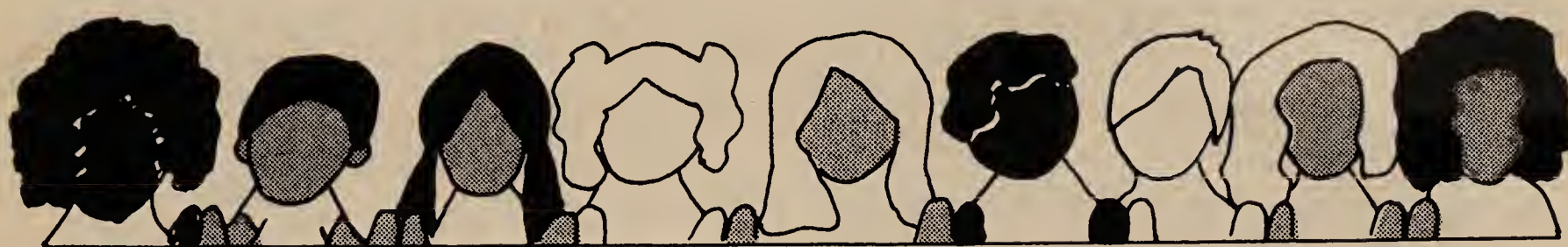
## GARDNER

Continued from Page 2

expectations for yourself and convert every challenge into an opportunity.”

The report and the speech concluded: “It is the America of all of us that is at risk; it is to each of us that this imperative is addressed. It is by our willingness to take up the challenge, and our resolve to see it through, that America’s place in the world will be either secured or forfeited. Americans have succeeded before and so we shall again.”





## GRANTS AWARDED

# Humanities in California Life

### THE GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT

**Sponsor: California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco**

An exhibit of approximately 100 photographs, both historical and contemporary, with interpretive materials consisting of a brochure, text/graphics panels, and a computer/video display will concisely depict the history, geology, agricultural and social development of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Valley.

A narrative history integrating text with maps, graphics, and photographs will document man's pervasive impacts on the land, among them a phenomenal agricultural industry, an extensive water distribu-

tion system, and the destruction of forests, marshlands and wildlife.

A symposium to be held at the opening of the exhibit will consider among others such topics as the ethics of land and water use, the nature of different value systems and how they clash in the valley; the consequences of immigration and the role of diverse ethnic values in the development of the valley; problems facing modern agriculture; and the role of the artist in influencing public issues.

An abridged form of the exhibit will be available to travel, and much of its content will be published in a book which will feature seven essays on the history and other aspects of the valley.

### ELEANOR ROOSEVELT: FIRST LADY OF THE WORLD, A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

**Sponsor: History Department, San Diego State University**

This program which includes a two-day public symposium and a two-week exhibit of memorabilia and photographs from the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York, will form the main west coast event commemorating the centennial of Eleanor Roosevelt's birth. The project is organized jointly by the San Diego State University departments of History, Afro-American Studies, Women's Studies and Political Science, and endorsed by

the Eleanor Roosevelt Centennial Commission authorized by Congress, with a large number of civic organizations taking part. It will emphasize Mrs. Roosevelt's influence on efforts to advance the status of women and ethnic minorities and her independent pursuit of the concerns of human rights in the United States and in the world.

The symposium will be addressed by historians and biographers of the Roosevelt era as well as members and friends of the family. In the light of recent scholarship concerning the politics of the time, the discussions are planned both to celebrate and to examine critically Eleanor Roosevelt's contributions to American Culture.

## Dissemination of Humanities

### IMMIGRANT YOUTH: OUT OF THE FIRE INTO THE MELTING POT

**Sponsor: Youth News, Oakland**

A ten-part series of 15-minute radio programs will focus on the experiences of newly arrived immigrant youth and families in California in comparison with those of American-born young people. Scholars in history, anthropology, sociology, languages and folklore will provide background, analysis and comment. Based on a report that immigrant students at the high school level have been isolated, bullied, disliked, ridiculed and even violently abused by other students because of social, cultural and language barriers, this project will attempt to help the two groups understand each other.

Youth News is a training program for high school students in radio and print journalism; reporters, interviewers and producers will be students.

Through interviews the project will clarify why the immigrant students left their native countries for California and some of the problems they have encountered in trying to become part of American culture. The program will illustrate potential contributions of the newcomers in fields such as arts, literature, crafts, folklore and oral traditions, music and dance.

### THE LEMON GROVE INCIDENT

**Sponsor: Public Television Station KPBS-TV, San Diego**

A one-hour documentary film will feature one of the earliest school desegregation cases in the United States.

Researched and partially narrated by the son of one of the participants, a second-grader in 1930, the film explores the historical context of immigration which began around the turn of the century from Mexico to the San Diego area. It then details the court case in the town of Lemon Grove where the school board, citing the need for an "Americanization" school to serve "backward" immigrant children, built a two-room schoolhouse in the immigrant section of town and assigned to it all children of Mexican descent, turning them away at the door of the "white" school.

The Mexican parents kept their children home from school rather than use the new building and filed suit against the segregation process. Though they won their case, incidents of school segregation against Mexican American children continued throughout the southwest for several decades, as the film shows, and other anti-Mexican stereotypes

prevailed, especially during the Depression years.

Intended for national broadcast on PBS, the film presents an important case study in the struggle for educational equity in America.

### TELL ME A STORY

**Sponsor: Public Radio Station KALW-FM, San Francisco**

A five-part series of California Stories, written and read to the radio audience by California authors, will reflect pockets of life within the state: north and south, urban, rural and in between, with characters of various racial and national origins. The project is part of a continuing series where major contemporary writers, and a few new voices, read their own short stories.

Conversation with the host, a distinguished California novelist, together with music and commentary, acquaints the listener with the author's personality and background, making each program not an episode or an excerpt, but a whole story, a complete experience. Using the premise that the power of a fine story is that it helps one person feel the pulse of another, and draws thought to what is human and valuable in oneself, a panel of California scholars in literature will choose the five stories to be read in the series.

## American Studies Association Calls for Papers

The Tenth Biennial American Studies Association Convention will be held in the fall of 1985 in San Diego, and proposals for individual papers, pre-planned sessions, workshops, panels and other professional contributions to the program are now being accepted. Proposals must be submitted with a proposal cover sheet obtained from the American Studies Association, 307 College Hall/CO, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, telephone 215/898-5408.

The deadline for submitting proposals is January 15, 1985.

## Monterey Institute To Sponsor Symposium

The Monterey Institute of International Studies will hold its Fourth Symposium on Comparative Literature and International Studies November 23-25 at the Institute. The theme of the symposium will be *Literature and War*. Programs and additional information are available from Professor Elizabeth Trahan, Symposium Coordinator, Monterey Institute of International Studies, 425 Van Buren St., Monterey, CA 93940, telephone 408/649-3113.



## GRANTS AWARDED

# Humanities and Contemporary Issues

### THE AMERICAN INDIAN IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE: AN EXAMINATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CULTURAL VALUES AND AMERICAN INDIAN POLICY

Sponsor: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles; American Indian Free Clinic, Inc.

A two-day conference will examine the American Indian policy process from the viewpoints of history, literature, anthropology, comparative religion, jurisprudence, and linguistics to explore its effects on the culture and values of Indian people in California.

### Humanities Institute To Hold Conference

The Humanities Institute, a forum for interdisciplinary exchange in the human sciences, will hold its third annual conference at the Alumni House on the UC Berkeley campus October 12, 13 and 14. The meetings are organized around three major topics: History and Culture: Weber's Protestant Ethic Eighty Years Later; Reassessments: Roman Jakobson; and Theory and Methods: The Idea of Poetry and the Poetry of Ideas.

The conference is open to all without charge, but registration is required. Details and a pre-registration form may be obtained by writing to Thomas A. Vogler, Chair, The Humanities Institute, Cowell College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Attention will focus primarily on the past decade which was marked by the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act, the Indian Land Consolidation Act and the Presidential Commission on Indian Reservation Economies as policy instruments. Each of these, to be understood, must be placed in historical context.

The conference is intended to open a dialogue among scholars and Indian community people.

### COLLOQUIA: MUSIC AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Sponsor: Center for Music Experiment, University of California, San Diego.

A series of six colloquia will bring together composers, performers, critics, scholars and audience members, seeking to arrive at a humanistic criticism of contemporary American Music.

The meetings will explore the relationships between critics, performers, composers and audiences, look at the history of contemporary American music, and consider the

economics of concert production. Participants will include professors of music, philosophy, visual arts, literature and anthropology, many of whom are also instrumentalists and composers, as well as performers, conductors, producers, and other professional musicians.

After brief presentations by panelists, the audience of 100 persons will be invited to join the discussion. The colloquia will be taped and summarized for publication.

### IMAGINING THE IMAGINATION: THE VARIETIES OF CONTEMPORARY CREATIVITY

Sponsor: The California Polytechnic State University Foundation

A speakers' series and public forum are designed to explore different ways in which imagination shapes an individual's and a community's perception of the future.

Designed for the campus community of a university dedicated to technology and a relatively isolated off-campus community now facing

expansion and technological development, the series of 12 presentations will pursue the question of how the imagination can guide reason in its search for values.

Scholars in philosophy, literature, languages, religious studies, sociology, art and art criticism, music and music history, will discuss the historical sources of imagination, the relationship between the creative side of the imagination and its critical aspect, and what possibilities of the imagination should be cultivated in order to feel that the future, as people enter upon the "computer culture," is still in their control.

## CCH Deadlines Change

CCH is in the process of revising its deadline structure; consequently there will be no deadline for proposals on January 31. The first deadline for 1985 will be April 1 for all categories of grants, including media projects. Henceforth media proposals will be accepted only twice a year and other categories three times.

A new program announcement containing these dates is to be published early in the year. Anyone who needs to know more about deadlines or grant categories should telephone the office in San Francisco, Los Angeles, or the San Diego number, toward the end of 1984. The numbers are listed on the back cover of this issue.

## Claremont to Observe Constitution Bicentennial

Merrill Peterson of the University of Virginia will inaugurate the annual Constitutional Statesmanship and Political Philosophy was an address on "Thomas Jefferson and Constitutional Change." Dr. Peterson will speak at 8 p.m. on October 11 in Bauer Hall, Claremont McKenna College.

The event is part of Novus

Ordo Seclorum, a program of conferences, publications and lectures supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities to stress seminal scholarship and public education. Details may be obtained from Dr. Ken Masugi, Director, Bicentennial Project, Claremont Institute, 480 N. Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont, California.



Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development



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**NEXT DEADLINES:** October 31, 1984  
April 1, 1985

Proposals for these deadlines must conform to the 1982-84 Program Announcement.  
TEN copies of all proposals must arrive in San Francisco office by the date due.

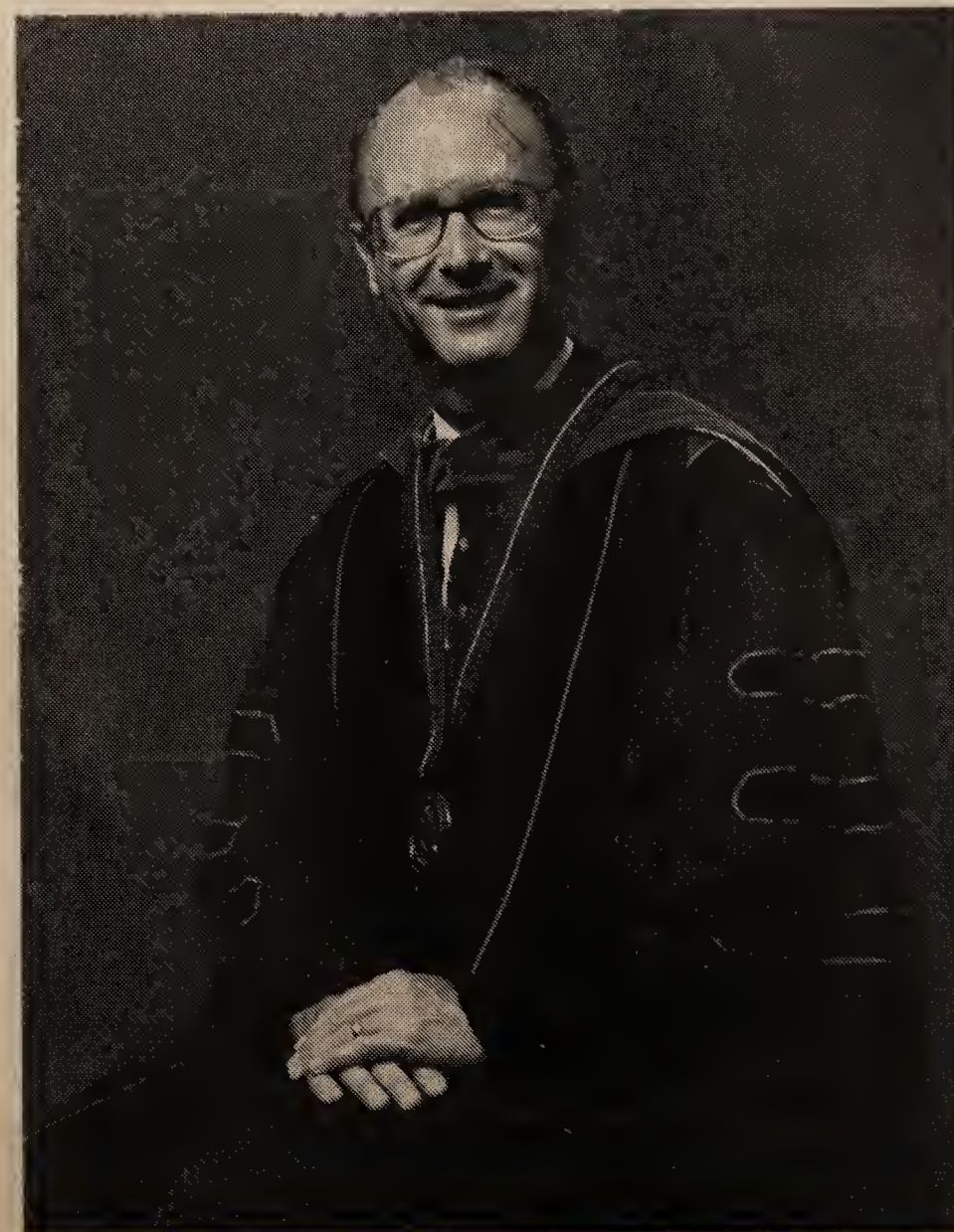
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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL  
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NEWSLETTER

**HUMANITIES**

California Humanities Lecture  
The Humanities and Our Future  
**HUMANITIES NETWORK**



G. PAUL BISHOP, JR. PHOTO

David Pierpont Gardner, President of the University of California

The CCH is a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities